United Nations

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ General Assembly says Security Council should exempt Bosnia and Herzegovina from arms embargo; calls for Council resolution providing for use of "all necessary means" if earlier resolutions not met; Assembly postpones recessing until Tuesday, 22 December.

+ Security Council condemns reported detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina; asks Secretary-General to assist European delegation in getting access to detention camps and to report to Council within 15 days.

+ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees deplores Israeli authorities' deportation of about 400 Palestinians; urges Israeli Government to agree to their immediate return.

+ United Nations peace-keepers in Cambodia, detained earlier this week by National Alliance of Democratic Kamphuchea, released; Indian UNTAC soldier killed accidentally by soldier in his battalion.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees receives $50 million in donation from George Soros, international philanthropist and financier, to improve security for trapped civilians in former Yugoslavia.

+ Eight United Nations relief trucks blown up on Wednesday in northern Iraq; third incident in under three weeks, but World Food Programme says winter aid programme will continue, with additional security.

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The General Assembly this morning called on the Security Council to exempt Bosnia and Herzegovina from the arms embargo imposed on the former Yugoslavia and urged the Council to consider authorizing Member States, in the event that Serbian and Montenegrin forces fail to comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions, to "use all necessary means" to restore the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(more)

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The Assembly took that action by adopting a resolution which urged the Council to consider those measures no later than 15 January 1993. It strongly condemned Serbia, Montenegro and Serbian forces for their violation of the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for their non-compliance with existing United Nations resolutions, as well as the London Peace Accords. The Assembly also supported the Council's consideration of immediate enforcement of its ban on military flights over Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In other action this morning, the Assembly decided to explore the provisions of the Charter on preventive diplomacy, as described in the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace", encouraged the Security Council to call on parties to settle their disputes peacefully, and to consult with the Secretary-General to develop a strategy for the peaceful settlement of specific disputes.

By other provisions of that resolution, the Assembly encouraged the creation of an early-warning mechanism for situations likely to endanger international peace and security and recommended the continued use of expert fact-finding missions to investigate the situation in areas of conflict.

Other action by the Assembly this morning included, among other things, an appeal to the international community for emergency assistance for Afghanistan and seven resolutions on the apartheid policies of the Government of South Africa.

The Assembly was expected to end its work for the forty-seventh session today, but has decided to postpone recessing until Tuesday, 22 December.

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The Security Council has strongly condemned massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina describing them as "acts of unspeakable brutality".

At a formal meeting this morning, all 15 members of the Council voted in favour of resolution 798 (1992) demanding that all such detention camps, and particularly camps for women, be closed immediately. The Council welcomed the initiative taken by the European Council to send a delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina to investigate the facts received until now and asked the Secretary-General to assist the delegation in getting free and secure access to the places of detention. The Secretary-General was also asked under the resolution to report to the Council within 15 days on measures taken to support the delegation.

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) today deplored the Israeli authorities' summary deportation to Lebanon of about 400 Palestinians living in the occupied territories. It urged the Israeli Government to agree to their immediate return.

(more)

Commissioner-General Ilter Turkmen said that on several occasions in the recent past, UNRWA had had reason to protest the practice of deportation, which had now been resumed on a greatly increased scale. The Agency also expressed its great regret at the hasty procedures used in carrying out the deportations, which demonstrated inadequate attention to the process of law. First reports indicated that the deportees, from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, included many Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA and at least one UNRWA staff member, and UNRWA considered the deportation of its staff members as inconsistent with the United Nations Charter.

The deportations, with the onset of winter, would result in considerable hardship for a large number of affected families in the occupied territories already experiencing increased economic hardship. In an attempt to assist the deportees themselves, the Commissioner-General said, UNRWA was making every effort, with the agreement of the Lebanese authorities, to provide immediate assistance in the form of food and warm clothing and whatever temporary shelter it could arrange. Two trucks had already been dispatched to take assistance to them.

The Security Council held consultations on the matter this afternoon.

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The 46 United Nations peace-keepers in Cambodia who had been detained earlier this week by the National Alliance of Democratic Kamphuchea (NADK), reportedly have been allowed to leave the village of Phum O Sala. According to the Spokesman for the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the group of Indonesian personnel were expected back in Kompong Thom earlier today.

An initial group of UNTAC peace-keepers was detaineed by the NADK on Wednesday and some of them were released yesterday. A second group of 34 Indonesian blue helmets was held when it went to Phum O Sala to investigate the detention of the first group.

In a separate incident yesterday, a soldier with UNTAC's Indian Battalion, Private Bhupen Chandraray, was shot by a soldier in his battalion. The Spokesman said that according to an initial investigation, the shooting had been an accident. The 27-year-old soldier died of injuries to the abdomen.

Private Bhupen Chandraray was the 20th person to have died while serving with UNTAC, and the fourth Indian in the operation to have died.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced today that it has received $50 million in a donation from George Soros, the international philanthropist and financier, to reinforce current efforts to bring security to the victims of the violence in former Yugoslavia.

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According to a press release issued by UNHCR, the donation would enable the Agency to add a new dimension to its operations. The funds would be administered by the UNHCR and distributed to private voluntary organizations. Working with the voluntary agencies, the UNHCR would try to improve security for trapped civilians through an increased international presence in areas of conflict.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that eight trucks were blown up on Wednesday near Zakho in northern Iraq after delivering food and seeds for the Kurdish population. Unexploded time bombs were also found in nine other trucks. There were no casualties and the trucks were empty.

This is the third incident in under three weeks in which United Nations relief trucks have been blown up and unexploded time bombs found on vehicles delivering WFP winter aid supplies in northern Iraq. Six trucks were blown up on 29 November and last week unexploded time bombs were found on another six.

Despite the latest incident, WFP is going ahead with its winter relief programme in Iraq to feed nearly half-a-million people in the central and southern areas. A convoy of 71 trucks is ready to leave Dohuk for Suleimanyah and Erbil, though it will only depart when the United Nations organizes additional security.

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A group of 500 Ethiopian refugees in Kenya began returning home today under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) voluntary repatriation programme. According to a UNHCR press release, the convoy of 15 trucks was the start of a program for the return of some 80,000 Ethiopians, 50,000 of whom have registered to return with UNHCR.

The repatriation from Walda and Banicca camps in Kenya is expected to be completed in two months at a cost of $2 million. Daily convoys of about 500 people will be departing from the camps, with the number increasing to 1,000 a day later.

Those heading back are being provided with a one-month supply of cereals and cooking oil. A number of quick impact projects to facilitate their reintegration are being implemented in the south of the country by UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, non-governmental organizations and the Ethiopian Government.

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